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## SUMMER VISITORS.

BY CATHERINE B. SELDEN.

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FORMERLY it was the "summer boarder" whose claims had to be met and whose delinquencies sometimes attracted public attention. Within the past few years, however, the number of those who own country homes, and who entertain their friends in their rural retreats, has so greatly increased that the summer visitor has become as conspicuous a member of society as his forerunner the boarder. It is to this class that a few words of warning as well as encouragement may now be judiciously directed, for the season is here when the host and guest alike need not only the spur of good intention, but the bridle of discretion.

There are undoubtedly many complications connected with entertaining in the city; but on the whole it is comparatively simple, for in most cases the visitor is only a "mealer," and when the repast is ended solicitude for the time being is over. In the country, however, it is quite different. In addition to the endless succession of meals there is the need of providing an uninterrupted series of amusements.

Since visiting is getting to be more and more a feature of country life, it behooves the housekeeper to make more systematic provision for it. It is her duty to learn what it may be expected to give, and recognize the sources of pleasure and pain involved in this phase of social life. In the country artificial aids to enjoyment, compared with those of the city, are exceedingly limited. Therefore people are thrown upon nature and upon their own wealth of resources for enlivenment; and unless they have a natural or acquired aptitude for self-entertainment they should not frequent the houses of those who would like to conduct their lives on another basis than the glare and noise of an electric

lighted existence. It is but natural and human that persons of social instincts should wish to enjoy the society of their friends, and for the kind-hearted to wish to do everything in their power to make their visits pleasant ; but the guests should see that their demands are not too rigorous. They should not rest satisfied with being "something between a hindrance and a help," but they should coöperate actively with the hostess in contributing to the pleasure of all.

However willing the American man may be to play well his part in social matters, he is seldom the star of the company. His anxious preoccupation with the world of business makes him only too glad to transfer all social cares and responsibilities to his wife, sometimes even relinquishing his rights and duties so far as to seem almost like a guest in his own house. It is therefore to the wife rather than to the husband that we must look for the "endurance, foresight, strength, and skill" to minister to the pleasure-seeking voyagers who take ship upon the summer sea of adventure ; many of whom, be it said, are so driven by the exigencies of our feverish life as to be the unhappy victims of physical depression or what is known as "brain fatigue." The hostess of even limited experience is quite accustomed to hear from the lips of the newly arrived visitor, "I am tired to death," and a day or two later the remarks : "I was never so dull in all my life," "I could sleep the whole day," "I have the appetite of an anaconda."

Intimations of physical exhaustion such as the above are far from being prophetic of anything that is *fête*-like or exhilarating. But better things might be hoped for if those who are thus afflicted would only conduct themselves wisely.

It is very easy for visitors of any penetration, if they once admit the importance of so doing, to become informed of the habits of the household with which they may temporarily be thrown, not only as regards the mere externals, but so far as the temper, the house *geist*, is concerned, the order of thought, its serious occupations, and its amusements. Furthermore if servants are not abundant, a willingness might be shown to lend a helping hand, not obtrusively, but effectively, and without being officious to assume some small share of the family burdens as well as the lion's share of its pleasures. Many things may be avoided which give trouble, and some things done to save it. There is also room for the display of a nice tact in ceasing to be a guest and becoming a mem-

ber of the household by means of a sympathetic understanding of its needs and desires.

The foregoing requirements may seem to make a heavy demand upon the casual visitor who comes but for a few days or a week at most. The duty resting upon such as these is light, and may be reduced to a few simple rules. To such an one it may be said, make yourself as agreeable as within you lies. Avoid looking as if you expected some novel entertainment every moment. In other words banish from your face the "What next?" expression and go at the appointed time, not with an injured and aggrieved air, but with the countenance of one who has had good measure at least, even if it has not been pressed down or is not running over. Absent yourself in your own room or out of doors a part of each day. Now every man and woman should have either some duty or pleasure which makes it necessary for their own well-being to withdraw themselves at least for a part of each day from the companionship and the presence of others. They should affect an occupation if they have it not, and invent an excuse, if necessary, for leaving those about them to seek the refreshment of solitude and systematic work. For a visitor to be *en evidence* from nine in the morning until eleven at night is too exhausting to the mental resources of any but the most gifted of mortals. There are few who can stand the test of so reckless a demand upon the wealth of the spirit; and such devitalizing practices can only be in harmony with the lives of those who lead an utterly purposeless and wasteful existence. It is the disregard of this feeling which sometimes makes the life of the hostess a state of bondage, so that missing her natural freedom her hospitable motive is quenched; not from any failing on her part, but from the lack of consideration on the part of others. Every right minded woman is prepared to give her guests the best that is in her, but she should not be expected to be "on tap," as it were, all of the time. "It is the part of a wise man," says Cervantes, "to keep himself to-day for to-morrow, and not to venture all his eggs in one basket."

It is only of late years that Americans, with their ever-abounding hospitality, have been able to bring themselves to the point of suggesting, by direct statement, any limit to the length of a visit; but now that the custom has become general, the designated time is of the nature of a law, and, if violated, brings its penal-

ties. The hostess knows best when it is time for her guest to depart. She is well aware of the nature of her resources, and if she has used them to advantage a visit of three days may be a perfect success, whereas, if it is prolonged three days more the added hours may be utterly vapid and unproductive of pleasure or profit. If a visit of a week is anticipated the same resources are differently managed; by stretching they may become somewhat attenuated, but all the same they may be counted upon with security and used with judgment. For whether or not the hostess is a person of "cheerful yesterdays" it is absolutely imperative she should be one of "confident to-morrows." She must be able, for the peace of her own mind, to lay her plans with reasonable certainty that they will be carried out. To achieve any sort of success she must be mindful of the many small details which insure the smooth running of the household machinery. Just in proportion as all knowledge of friction or care is withheld from the guest is he in danger of erring from a sense of false security. Where everything glides along so easily and his pleasure is so amply secured, he runs the risk of forgetting the means by which such results are brought about, and he is apt to think so long as he is well pleased his going or staying is a matter of small consequence. But this is sometimes an unwise conclusion.

Nevertheless it does seem hard when a mortal has found just the conditions that suit him, to be obliged to uproot himself and journey towards a less congenial state. He must remember, however, he has had no part in making the home whose comforts yield him so large a share of satisfaction, and that he runs the risk of being included among that portion of humanity which, like the cuckoo, is perfectly willing to occupy another's home, so long as it may be saved the trouble of making its own. Such nice calculation is, of course, unnecessary in the case of well tried and approved friends, but even these, like little Joe, had best "move on" at the natural terminus of a visit. It is better to leave a regret behind, the wish on the part of our friends for a speedy renewal of intercourse, rather than have them suffer from a sense of impoverished vitality.

There are ideal visitors as well as ideal hosts. Both to entertain and to visit are fine arts. Complete success in either relation depends not only upon the power of adaptation and amiability, but upon the store of natural gifts or acquirements the individual

may possess. Therefore it is well for every one to look to his qualifications for giving pleasure under conditions which are somewhat exacting.

With all our general diffusion of instruction in America, education, so far as it affects the whole conduct of life, has not yielded its full possibilities, nor will it do so until we recognize not only moral worth, but social charm as necessary to any harmonious scheme of living. Notwithstanding the time and money spent upon teaching music we have very little music in our homes. It is almost as rare with us as it is frequent in Europe for two or three persons to join in song or play together upon different instruments. Indeed we have no songs which are the common property of a room full of either cultivated or illiterate people. It was a part of the education of our parents to commit poetry to memory, and it was their firm belief that no other mental acquisition is so unfailing a source of pleasure and inspiration. In the country especially, a well-remembered store of poetry is a good thing to have at one's tongue's end. To be able to read aloud with intelligence and skill is also a charming accomplishment and one easily acquired, since there is no dearth of good teachers. The occasions when conversation naturally flares are the ones which furnish the opportunity for either of these agreeable pastimes, both of which, to say the least, may be considered more inspiring than asking conundrums. This last form of mental exercise may be classified among our national vices. It is the one kind of entertainment that is seldom lacking either at the boarding-house table or on the verandas of country homes.

In conclusion it is almost needless to say that reticence on the part of visitors concerning what they may have seen and heard in the houses of others is of the nature of a sacred obligation. Under certain circumstances it is even well to have "cobwebs in one's eyes" and cotton in one's ears. The family is very much at the mercy of the sojourner, and for this reason, if for none other, the order of living should be one of dignified reserve. The presence of a congenial guest is a great help towards maintaining a seemly plan of life. It is apt to check the unnecessary discussion of personal matters and to direct the conversation into wider channels than the petty interests into which the family talk too often flows.

C. B. SELDEN,